

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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SUBJ: ELECTION PREPARATIONS CONTINUE

REF: MANILA 1499

1. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT MARCOS HAS NOT YET SIGNED CONTROVERSIAL ELECTION CODE INTO LAW. SEVERAL POLITICIANS HAVE URGED RECONSIDERATION OR POSTPONEMENT OF CODE'S MAJOR NEW PROVISION, BLOC VOTING -- I.E., VOTING BY PARTY TICKET RATHER THAN BY INDIVIDUAL CANDIDATE. PRESS COMMENT IS LOYAL BUT UNENTHUSIASTIC. MEANWHILE, PRESIDENT MARCOS WILL CONVENE HIS OLD NACIONALISTA PARTY THIS WEEK; THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OKAYED THE CANDIDACY OF PRIESTS AS PRIVATE CITIZENS; AND THE OPPOSITION CONSIDERED THAT TO DO NEXT. END SUMMARY.

2. REACTION TO BATASAN BAYAN'S ADOPTION OF "BLOC VOTING" OCCUPIED MUCH OF WEEKEND. ON SUNDAY (JANUARY 29) TELEVISION SHOW, FORMER VICE PRESIDENT AND SENATOR EMMANUEL PELAEZ SAID THAT APRIL 2 ELECTION IS CRUCIAL BECUASE IT IS
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THE FIRST MAJOR STEP TOWARDS NORMALIZATION. "IF BLOC VOTING IS AN OBSTACLE, THE PRESIDENT SHOULD REMOVE SUCH OBSTACLE TO ENSURE MAXIMUM PARTICIPATION OF ALL INTERESTED PARTIES." ON SMAE PROGRAM, EX-SENATOR SALVADOR LAUREL, WHO HEADS "THIRD FORCE" OF MILD OPPOSITION, SAID PRESIDENT MAROCS SHOULD POSTPONE BLOC VOTING. MATTER SHOULD BE LEFT FOR DECISION BY THE INTERIM BATASANG PAMBANSA (IBP)

WHEN IT CONVENES. LAUREL SUGGESTED THAT OPTIONAL BLOC VOTING COULD BE USED IN LATER ELECTIONS, AFTER THE THREE POLITICAL PARTIES ALLOWED UNDER THE CONSTITUTION HAVE BEEN ACCREDITED. IN A PRESS INTERVIEW JANUARY 30, EX-SENATOR ERNESTO MACEDA (ALSO NACIONALISTA) URGED RESUMPTION OF PUBLIC HEARINGS ON ELECTION CODE TO DISCUSS BLOC VOTING BEFORE PRESIDENT SIGNS DECREE.

3. PRESS REACTION TO BLOC VOTING CONTINUES TO BE LUKEWARM AT BEST. EDITORIAL IN DAILY EXPRESS AND TIMES JOURNAL AND VIRTUALLY ALL COLUMNISTS HAVE ATTACKED CONCEPT OF BLOC VOTING. HOWEVER, THEIR PIECES ALL END WITH A LOYAL ON-THE-OTHER-HAND HOMILY POINTING OUT THAT BLOC VOTING WILL SIMPLIFY BALLOTING AND WILL BENEFIT CANDIDATES FROM SMALL PROVINCES.

4. IN AN OBVIOUS CONCILIATORY GESTURE TOWARD DISGRUNTLED OPPOSITION, MALACANANG ANNOUNCED JANUARY 29 THAT PRESIDENT MARCOS WILL ADD A NEW CHAPTER TO THE ELECTION CODE BEFORE HE PROMULGATES IT. NEW CHAPTER WILL SIMPLIFY PROCEDURE FOR REGISTRATION OF PARTIES, THEORETICALLY PUTTING OPPOSITION GROUPS ON MORE EQUAL FOOTING VIS-A-VIS GOVERNMENT PARTY.

5. SUNDAY PAPERS HEADLINE REMARK MARCOS MADE TO BATASAN BAYAN CAUCUS THURSDAY NIGHT ON QUESTION OF TENURE OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INTERIM BATASAN BAYAN. MARCOS REPORTEDLY SAID THAT THE INTERIM BATASANG PAMBANSA SHOULD NOT EXIST LONGER THAN THE SIX-YEAR TENURE OF THE REGULAR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. "THE TEMPORARY LEGISLATURE MAY EXIST FOR THREE OR FOUR YEARS, OR EVEN FOR A SHORTER PERIOD," HE SAID, "UNLESS THERE IS VIOLENCE."

6. MARCOS HAS CALLED MEETING OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF NACIONALISTA PARTY AT HIS PRIVATE RESIDENCE IN MANILA FEBRUARY 1. JANUARY 31 MEDIA INDICATE THAT NACIONALISTA PARTY EXPECTS TO FIELD A FULL SLATE OF CANDIDATES NATIONWIDE. PRINCIPAL QUESTION TO BE CONSIDERED, APPARENTLY, IS HOW THE OLD NP WILL RELATE TO A NEW "BAGONG LIPUNAN (NEW SOCIETY) PARTY" HINTED BY COLUMNISTS.

7. JAIME CARDINAL SIN ANNOUNCED JANUARY 30, AT CONCLUSION OF SEMI-ANNUAL BISHOPS' CONFERENCE IN BAGUIO, THAT CATHOLIC CHURCH WILL "TAKE A DEFINITE STAND ON THE ELECTIONS AND THE MANNER OF ELECTIONS" BEFORE APRIL 2. HE ADDED THAT PRIESTS MAY RUN FOR IBP SEATS AS PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS, PROVIDED THEY HAVE PERMISSION FROM THEIR BISHOPS.

8. TWO EXPLICITLY OPPOSITIONIST GROUPS WERE QUOTED IN WEEKEND NEWSPAPERS REGARDING THEIR DECISIONS TO PARTICIPATE OR NOT IN THE ELECTIONS. ACCORDING TO DAILY EXPRESS JANUARY 29, A SPOKESMAN FOR THE "INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ASSOCIATION" (INAA), HEADED BY FORMER PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL, SAID HIS GROUP WOULD NOT FIELD CANDIDATES FOR THE IBP. ANOTHER OPPOSITION GROUP, "THE UNITED DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION," REPORTEDLY "MIGHT" PUT UP CANDIDATES IN FOUR REGIONS: CENTRAL LUZON, METRO-MANILA,, SOUTHERN TAGALOG AND CENTRAL VISAYAS. SPOKESMAN EMMANUEL SANTOS (WHO IS ASSOCIATED WITH SENATOR SALONGA) SAID HIS GROUP WOULD MEET SHORTLY TO "FINALIZE THEIR STAND." (SANTOS WAS SPOKESMAN THE PREVIOUS DAY FOR GROUP HEADED BY SENATOR ROXAS WHICH ANNOUNCED IT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WOULD NOT PARTICIAPTE IF BLOC VOTING IS ADOPTED.) EMBASSY CONTACTS WITH OTHER OPPOSITION LEADERS WILL BE REPORTED SEPTEL. NEWSOM

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